(b) whether the compensation is at par with what is being given to the families from Western countries in similar circumstances; and

(c) if not, what action Government propose to take in this direction to ensure that no discrimination is made between Indian and other members of the UN Peace keeping force in Somalia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) to (c). In terms of the guidelines issued by the UN and the terms and conditions issued by the Ministry of Defence, Indian soldiers on deputation to the United Nations Peace Keeping Operatoin in Somalia are to be paid compensation in the event of death as per national regulations. The United Nations only reimburses the amount of compensation which national governments pay according to national regulations.

In the above situation, the compensation given to soldiers from other countries are not on par with those given to Indian soldiers, as these would entirely depend upon the regulations of the respective national governments.

India, with other developing countries, has been trying to ensure that UN adopts a system where there is no discrimination in the amounts of compesation paid in the event of death of a soldier on UN peace keeping duties, irrespective of his nationality.

Stopping the Ship taking Hajjs by Sea

38. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the reason for stopping the ship taking the Hajis by sea;

(b) whether Government of India were subsidising the sea fares to the Hajis; if so, how much subsidy was given per Haji;

(c) whether Government have any proposal to consider Private Sector to organise Ship Charter for Hajis; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) Government has decided that all the pilgrims will be carried by air beginning from Haj 1995. The reasons for discontinuation of ship are as follows:

1. The facility for travel by ship was available only to a relatively small number of pilgrims as compared to the total number of Indian pilgrims proceeding for Haj.

2. It was difficult to adhere to the time-frames prescribed by the Saudi authorities for arrival and departure of pilgrims to and from Saudi Arabia in the case of sea pilgrims.

3. Saudi authorities encourage the performance of the Haj by air. They have created infrastructural facilities for handling all the pilgrims coming by air.

4. Pilgrims going by ship had to stay for 65 days in Saudi Arabia as compared to 45 days for pilgrims by air. In view of high cost of living in Saudi Arabia, many pilgrims faced problems of running short of funds.

5. Till 1994, India was one of the four countries in the world which sent its pilgrims by sea also. For Haj 1995, only two neighbouring countries i.e. Egypt and Sudan will ferry their pilgrims across the sea.

6. The amount of subsidy, direct or indirect, for sea travel for Haj 1994 was Rs. 32,000 as compared to Rs. 5,000 per pilgrim by air. Government considers that expenditure on Haj could better be used to ameliorate the conditions of pilgrimage for all pilgrims.

(c) and (d) No. Sir: does not arise.